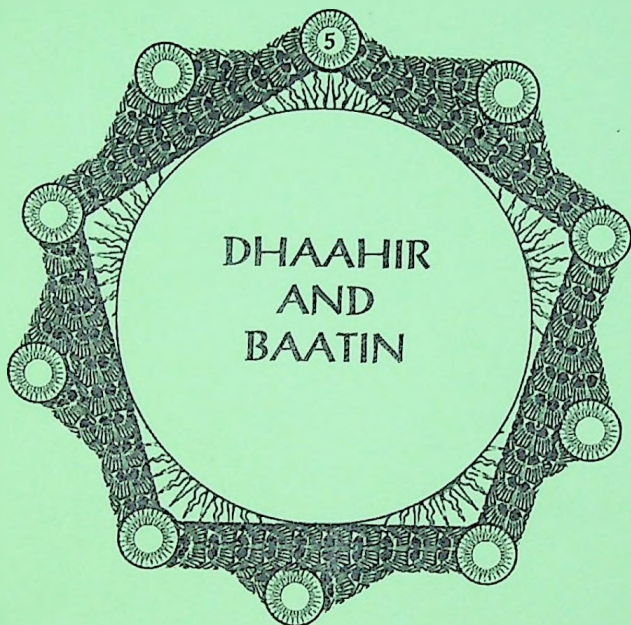


بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ



by
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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ



DHAAHIR
AND
BAAIIN

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DHAAHIR AND BAATIN

*Allaahumma salli 'alaa sayyiddinaa Muhammad,
al-fatih ughliq, wa-l-hatim limaa-sabaq,
nasir al-haqq bi-l-haqq,
wa-l-haadi ilaa siraata-l-mustaqeem,
wa 'alaa aalihi wa sahhibi
haqq qadrihi wa miqdarihi-l-'adheem.*

O Allah shower Your Blessings upon our master Muhammad,
the opener of what has been closed and the seal of what has passed,
the champion of truth by the Truth,
and the guide to Your straight path,
and on his family and his companions
with the equivalent to the greatness due to his exalted status.

INTRODUCTION

Everything Allah (*Subhaanahu wa ta'aalaa*) has created apparently has two aspects, the *dhaahir* (outer) and the *baatin* (inner). But in fact, the inner and the outer are really the same; it is our perception that makes us think that they are different. Allah (*Subhaanahu wa ta'aalaa*) is one/*ahad*. Look at the human body, outwardly it appears one way, while inwardly there are other 'worlds.' The actions of the body are totally different than the activities going on within the body. Within our body there are hidden systems so alien to us that we would shudder to think we are hosting them; yet without their activity, we could not live.

We make a distinction between the inner and the outer, a distinction made in Qur'an when it says:

Huwa-dh-Dhaahir wa-l-Baatin.

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He is the Outwardly Manifest and the Inwardly Hidden.
(57:3)

But we should not forget that the *dhaahir* and the *baatin* are two parts of a singularity, a dynamic whole we call Allah (*Subhaanahu wa ta'ala*), unity unbounded and ever extending.

The Messenger of Allah (*salla-Llaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said:

O Allah, You are adh-Dhaahir and there is nothing above You, and You are al-Baatin and there is nothing beneath You.

The Messenger of Allah (*salla-Llaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) also said: "*Allah is eternally existent and nothing else is.*"

Imam al-Bayhaqiyy elucidated the meaning of this *hadith* in his book "Al-I'tiqad" (The Creed), saying: "*This indicates that eternally nothing existed other than Allah; no water, no 'Arsh (Throne), and no other creation; they are all classified as other than Allah.*"

So, for the purpose of this *dars* I will refer to the *dhaahir* and *baatin*, but I ask you to think of it as two elements of one. We can see that Islam doesn't separate the inner from the outer; it is a total integrative system. This is reflected in the *dhaahir*, as emphasized in the community as a whole, through repetitious patterns, such as prayer in *jam'at*, to underscore the inter-connected and inter-dependent relationship between 'believers.' While each member of the community is significantly different in the outer, we are uniquely similar in the physical system.

The systemic harmony that is inherent in this creation, must be sought after consciously and sincerely, if we are to understand the nearness of Allah:

Huwa ma'dakum ayna maa kuntum

He is with you, wherever you are (57:4)

To see the systemic harmony, the nearness of Allah, is the life challenge for one who is truly a humane human being, a seeker after knowledge and truth, a developer of character—not one motivated out of greed or power or fame or name. As we look at societies today, that deep yearning to see and understand seems to have been abandoned by the vast majority of people who see this world as the only reality; and, at best, see the next (if they believe at all in the Hereafter) as merely the reward for existing, with little regard to the quality or principles governing goodness and evil.

In the comings and goings of daily life we forget that we are one tiny part of the greater whole of humanity, which is itself one piece in our planet's ecosystem. We forget that our planet is part of an integrative system of the solar system, which is part of the galaxy, which is part of the universe, which is one of many universes. It is an endlessly integrated system. If you look at the floor, the wall—all reflect the same universal Reality. If you could look at an electron microscope you would see the same system, the same internally consistent, ever-repeating system.

So, where is the dividing line between the inner and outer? Is it what is seen only? Is it what is known, only? Is there really a line, or as we gain knowledge, true knowledge (*md'rifah*), as we gain the capacity of *baseerah*, does that apparent line recede? How limited is this linear view? Is it not better to at least try to conceptualize it more like concentric circles emerging from one source, like ripples of waves when a stone is cast into still water...going out, and returning only when meeting a barrier. But what if there is no barrier?

We can understand that the *dhaahir* and *baatin* are not only two aspects of the same whole, but also two faces of each moment. Our challenge, if we are seekers, is to seize the moment (*waqt*) through remembrance of the Divine Presence. In doing that we are finding harmony (*meezaan*); we are present in the Presence, *inshaa'a-Llaah*. That process itself is endless but to be conscious, truly conscious, it demands constant vigilance, constant attentiveness, and continuous remembrance, *dhikr*.

According to Bukhari, Abu Musa al-Ashcari related that the Prophet (salla-Llaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) said, "The difference between the one who makes *dhikr* and the one who doesn't make *dhikr* is like the difference between the living and the dead."

Through remembrance we are linked with the events of the past, and it is upon remembrance we build our futures. By remembering Allah (Subhaanahu wa ta'alaah) the Creator, the essential Truth, we are remembering our origin, understanding our place and creating what appears to be our future; yet, who are we in the inner? Are we to gauge our being by our age and our physical appearance, or by our state, our knowledge and our character? Our bodies may tell us one thing, but our mind and heart another. I am constantly surprised by the discrepancy between my inner state and mind and the limitations of this body. Is that not the narrative we see everywhere, spoken in nature and all life, the eternal internal potential against the apparent reality of the outer cycles of birth and life and death?

I was on a train recently and an older man walked past me and said, "Excuse me young man." I said, "Thank you for the compliment." And he said, "It's true; we are young because we once were young and we experienced youth. So we are still young and more than that we are also aged."

Alhamduli-Llaah. If we are the sum total of what we always were, and the future is 'more' than that, it is truly a reflection of the *sifaat*, the *Asmaa' al Husnaa'* that is Allah (Subhaanahu wa ta'alaah). But Allah (Subhaanahu wa ta'alaah) is *more* than that, in time and before time. *Allaahu akbar* (Allah is Greater). Whatever it is, Allah is Greater than that.

Why is this important to our understanding of *dhaahir* and *baatin*? As I speak today about on this subject, I ask you to keep this perspective in mind. *Dhaahir* and *baatin* are part of every aspect of our creation, from our physical bodies, to our individual characters (*akhlaaq*). But do not forget that in some ways, it is all a metaphor, a corridor (*majaaz*) to help us move from one place in our understanding to another, and find the balance between the inner and outer. I will

return to this idea of *majaaz*, as it relates to the outer and inner, but first let me speak about how we perceive the *dhaahir* and *baatin*.

PERCEIVING THE INNER AND OUTER

The things we encounter in our day-to-day life with our five senses (which correlate to the four elements: earth, air, fire, water) and with our cognitive capability are the *dhaahir*. The things that are hidden from the sense are the *baatin*; that which is unseen. But the *baatin* can be sensed with our unique cognitive and intuitive senses. We sense the *baatin* through the organs of perception of the *lataa'if*: *qalb*, *ruuh*, *sirr*, *khafee*, *akhfaa* and *nafs*. Part of the challenge of life is learning how to see and understand these two aspects that Allah has created.

As I mentioned in my introduction, to try to grasp what we call the "unicity" of Allah, or the diversity within the Unity, we must see and interact with both the outer and the inner. We might ask, why are we structured in such a way that we live or act in a dualistic system, when we are spiritually seeking the resolution of that apparent duality?

If we look around us, we see that the dynamics of life are reflected in this constant change or movement between the awareness of the outer and inner: it is the dynamic of life itself. We are surrounded by dualities that make up a whole: sleep and wakefulness, dreams and reality, life and death, male and female, up and down, sky and earth, day and night, positive and negative, attraction and repulsion. These are the most basic building blocks of our universe. Allah speaks to us repeatedly about 'pairs' in Qur'an:

Wa min kulli shay'in khalaqana zawayni la'allakum takhakkaron.

And All things We have created in pairs in order that you might reflect. (51:47-49)

We have the ability taste these different aspects of Reality; to simultaneously recognize the duality and wholeness. As in the dream state we can be in the dream and yet also aware of the fact that we are dreaming. But most people are content to stay asleep, letting the

'dream' be their reality. Some of us, though, are deeply and profoundly motivated to move through the corridor (*majaaʒ*) between these apparent realities—not automatically, as in sleep, but consciously and by choice—through meditation, *dhikr*, and contemplation. This allows us greater understanding and vision, but it can also heal the body, sustain the viability of the mind, and give us insight (*baseerah*) into a timeless, non-linear dimension that transcends the limitations of mere worldly assumptions and knowledge (information). The track through this *majaaʒ* is *tawajjuh* and *dhikr*, attentiveness and remembrance. But each of us must adjust the lens through which we 'see,' by directing our attention progressively through the lenses we are provided with—the *lataaʾif*, subtle organs of perception.

The *lataaʾif* are the lenses we use to focus our sight and understanding on the *baaṭin*. They are tracks through the corridor that allow us to be here in this world and aware of the Infinite at the same time. This conscious back and forth movement between two apparent worlds, or rather two aspects of one reality, create a rhythm in life that provides consonance and balance, which, in turn maximizes our human and our spiritual potential. This rhythm is characterized in the *dhaahir* by the five prayers each day.

AL-MAJAAZ: THE WAY BETWEEN

There are certain concepts and realities that can only be seen vis-a-vis *majaaʒ* (metaphor). A metaphor is a word or phrase that exists and changes as it travels from one linguistic, semiotic state to another. What is 'seen' in the final state or stage of development will, over time, be the basis of change that allows us to see into the unseen, facilitating changes in cultural orientation, mentality, even our language.

There are spiritual realities or concepts that are inaccessible directly, but for the interface of *majaaʒ*. Without metaphor, those spiritual realities won't be revealed. Just like when you hear a poem, you hear words. They are images of reality, but in some way there is a non-spoken, spiritual experience that is taking place that uplifts you and

deepens your knowledge. Knowledge from the *baaṭin* is traveling through the metaphorical corridor (the *majaaʒ*) to the *dhaahir*. It has been transformed. Words that independently have one meaning, in combination take on or imply a totally different meaning or concept. An example of this is the use of wine and intoxication in Persian poetry.

In the *dhaahir*, things are actualized. In the *baaṭin*, things are compressed and condensed—even time. For example, the Prophet (*ṣallā-Llāhu ʿalayhi wa sallam*) stated that, **"An hour's contemplation is better than seventy years of worship."** And some traditions and *ṣuqahaa'* have even mentioned it as being better than a thousand years of worship.

In the *dhaahir* things are only nominally connected and require the development of understanding to connect the elements of events or elements in creation, while in the *baaṭin* things are obviously connected and reflective of the Unity. In the *baaṭin*, everything is one, unending...infinite. It has the same message, so every little thing affirms the infinite. The *dhaahir* is the emergent abstraction. The *baaṭin* is the innermost concealed essence or core. Ibn Arabi (*radiya-Llāhu ʿanhū*) said,

When the spirit descends upon the heart of the servant, through the sending down of the angel and casting of the revelation of Allah, the heart of one to whom it is sent down becomes alive.

The heart he is talking about is not just this thing that is beating in our chest, but there is a relationship between the physical heart and the spiritual heart, or *lateefah qalb*. Analogically or metaphorically what takes place in the heart in human life is transformational. It is filled with many meanings and knowledge that come to us unplanned and unprepared. Love or grief, loss, sorrow, or fear—things that are bestowed upon us by life, just as Allah bestows upon us His *Tajalli*—cause changes in our spiritual heart/*qalb*.

The subtlety of that *lateefah qalb*, the heart, is the most important subtlety; consequently, our heart is referred to as the most important

center of the spiritual body and the most important of the *lataa'if*. When the eye of the heart opens, it transforms us spiritually and gives the potential to see what is real. When it is operating properly and functionally, it is able to distinguish between what is real and what is an illusion, what is good and bad, right and wrong, true and false.

If it is not functioning properly, just like the physical heart, it loses its rhythm and capability. Since the heart's purpose is an extension, or an aggregator of the revelatory organ based on the other senses of perception or capabilities of the other *lataa'if*, a person's heart, which is oriented toward the Divine Presence, leads a person to this receptivity of the *tajalli* and knowledge.

AKHLAAQ AND MEEZAAN

If we understand this interconnected system of inner and outer, in which individual balance and the balance of our environment is linked, I think we will also begin to understand that destructive human forces, environmentally and socially, are less a problem of resources and resource utilization than they are a result of attitude and character, and ultimately manifestations of disbelief, arrogance and *shirk*. Because we are all part of the same unified system, our attitudes effect our environment. In turn, the destruction of natural resources, through war or economic exploitation, has profound results on human psychology, health, relationships and well-being; hence, the need for a spiritually alive, spiritually based value system that resonates with the human soul and with the Divine Commands emerging from the '*aalam al-amr*, the world of command.

Acting in harmony with our creation is acting in harmony with our Creator; hence, the necessity for responsible behavior, intellectual astuteness, humility and obedience to the Will of Allah (*Subhaanahu wa ta'ala*), and awareness of that Divine Presence with *taqwah* (pious respect). What we see can and should be *aayaat* (signs) and reflections for us to contemplate—doorways to the Infinite.

Allah created this earth and created us in a beautiful form:

Laqada khalaqana-l-insana fii absani taqawim.

Truly we created the human being in the best form.
(95:4)

And He also tells us in Qur'an, "Do what is beautiful [kind], as Allah has done what is beautiful [kind] to you." (28:77)

He has made us beautiful in form. And it is why we are so aware of the foundation (*ihsaan*) why we are created to give praise (*tahseen*) to Allah (*Subhaanahu wa ta'ala*). Because of this, we have an obligation to behave in a beautiful way; to reflect on the Divine Presence and see it's reflection in us—in our lives, in our relationship to the world, to the planet, to one another. By doing this, we will be acting in accordance with the form and nature that Allah (*Subhaanahu wa ta'ala*) created us with. When someone behaves in this way, there is a harmonization with what was created. Through our actions and the depths of our understanding, there is a harmonization of the inner and the outer; the *dhaahir* and the *baatin*.

This harmony of the *baatin* and the apparent outer (*dhaahir*) is called *akhlaaq*. *Akhlaaq* refers to the practice of virtue, morality and manners, and the consequent aspect of the unseen (*'aqeedah*/beliefs). The essence of *akhlaaq* is to act from our spiritual character (or *ruh*, *sirr*, *khafee*, *akhfaa*) rather than acting out of our *nafs ammaarah* and lower aspects of our human nature. The word *akhlaaq* is the plural for the word *khulq* which means disposition. 'Disposition' is a property of the soul that comes into existence from the *baatin*; it is manifest in the *dhaahir* through exercise and repetitive practice.

Al-Ghazaali (*radiya-Llaahu 'anhu*) encouraged his students to reflect on the external and internal forms of beauty, saying, "There are three kinds of beauty. The first is external physical beauty (*dhaahir*) that he regards as the most debased form."

In *Al-Kimya al-Sa'adaa* (*The Alchemy of Happiness*) he writes, "...as to [man's] beauty, he is little more than nauseous matter covered with a fair skin. Without frequent washing he becomes utterly repulsive and disgraceful."

The second type is moral beauty (*baatin*) that he relates to a person's character:

The former kind of man (a man who is only acquainted with sensuous delights) will say that beauty resides in red-and-white complexions, well-proportioned limbs, and so forth. But he will be blind to moral beauty, such as men refer to when they speak of such and such a man as possessing a beautiful character. But those possessed of inner perception find it quite possible to love the departed great, such as the Khalifas Omar and Abu Bakr, on account of their noble qualities, through their bodies have long been mingled with the dust. Such love is directed not towards any outward form, but towards the inner character. Even when we wish to excite love in a child towards anyone, we do not describe their outward beauty or form, etc . . . , but their inner excellences.

We know from reports of the remains of some *awliyaa* that their bodies remain uncorrupted even after centuries of internment. It seems as a testimonial to true *hasana*, goodness of the being.

The third type of beauty that al-Ghazaali (*radiya-Llaahu 'anhu*) describes is the spiritual. It is the most sublime, because it is directly connected to the Almighty:

The heart of man has been so constituted by the Almighty that, like a flint, it contains a hidden fire that is evoked by music and harmony, and renders man beside himself with ecstasy. These harmonies are echoes of that higher world of beauty that we call the world of spirits. They remind man of his relationship to that world, and produce in him an emotion so deep and strange that he himself is powerless to explain it.

To be in harmony with one's environment, with others, and with one's inner and outer self facilitates the gaining of insight (*baseerah*) and brings one nearer to awareness of Divine Presence. As Sufis, we are seeking to rend the veils that hide that third type of beauty, the beauty of balance, the dynamic movement between the apparent inner an outer. More precisely, we are seeking clear discernment (*firaasa*) in the moment (*waqt*) of our *zaman* and *maqam* (time and

place), out of which conscious decision, action and response will arise. We will at will have free access, through the *majaaz*.

As Allah says to us in Suratu-r-Rahman:

Wa-s-samaa'a rafa'aha wa wada'a a-l-mizan—

alla tatghow fi-l-mizan.

And He has raised up the sky and set the balance—

That you might not transgress the balance. (55:7-8)

When you look at the perfection of creation, the beauty of the Creator and the essence of the Creator, the *dhaahir* leads you to the *baatin*.

Even though my initial statement was that there is truly no duality, we also know that the experience of daily life presents opposites to us, and we make choices moment to moment where we turn our attention. We are constantly seeking out the balance. Only when we arrive at the *maqam* (station) where we 'see' the outer as an expression of the inner can we truly understand. Until we achieve that understanding, we must act by choosing, balancing, turning, intending and attending to life 'as if' it was dual.

The Shaykh Mohammad ibn Ali (*radiya-Llaahu 'anhu*) said:

Then wrap yourself in patience and wind on the turban of self-renewal. You need the shirt of doing-without, and you should wear yourself out in it.

The Shaykh also tells us:

The murid desires to travel on the spiritual path from the presence of creation and beings, to the presence of the Reality and direct seeing (basira) as a compensation for his reparation, his service and longing and his love. The end is in your Lord who is endless; union to Allah is

awareness of His Presence and gnosis, and only the patient achieve this station.

OUTER WORK, INNER INTENTION

When we hear and think about the *dhaahir* and *baatin*, as I have spoken about it today, there is a tendency to segregate these two aspects, in our thinking and in our lives. We divide our 'private self' and our 'public self,' our 'work life' and our 'spiritual life,' our 'secular friends' and our 'religious friends.' But my point today is they are not separate. Allah is *Ahad*, so we cannot, and should not separate the two aspects of the whole in our own lives. As Allah says in Qur'an:

Do not those who cover up the Truth see that the heavens and the earth were of one piece, and We parted them? (21:30)

Shaykh Abu Madyan (*radiya-Llaahu 'anhu*) focusing his teaching on this point, encouraging his students to treat life as a whole—relationships, ethics, codes (*akhlaaq*), as well as, *amal*, work and social action. This outward focus was a focus of the spiritual expressions, spiritual experiences in life. Until his time, the internalization of spiritual life had always been regarded as the most essential life for the Sufi, the pious life. He said that the inner comprised only part of the work/*amal*. He made a distinction between the *dhaahir* (the outer) and the *baatin* (the inner aspects of reality), to the point where he said that these two aspects were not understood to mean that the interior was more real than the exterior; but the application and the insights that arise from the interior are the criteria for meaningfulness in the outer.

In a way we could say that he focused on the *ummata wasita*, the people of the center or the middle path. The spiritual method has to be outer and inner, public and private, worldly and spiritual, but they have to complement each other as though they are a single reality. The foundation has to be in the spiritual, inner practice, and its application manifest in the outer. To maintain *meezaan*, nothing one does in the outer should be far from the reality of the inner; nothing

one does in the outer should be far from your own consciousness of the inner. The best way to accomplish that, of course, is to be so cognizant of the Divine Presence that everything reminds you of Allah (*Subhaanahu wa ta'alaan*), such that with every action we take, we are in consonance with the Presence or Attributes of Allah: the *haadaree*.

There cannot be a conflict between our outer work and our inner knowledge, or between our outer work and our inner intention. Just as people who put all their attention on the outer are unbalanced, the Sufis who put all their emphasis on only the inner, and removed themselves from society, who became outwardly pious did not have a balanced, spiritual experience. Spiritual growth requires balance. Most people want to start with the outer and work toward the inner, but in fact one needs to start with the *baatin* and the *dhaahir* together—the point counterpoint.

There have always been Sufis who were very deeply, profoundly spiritual people and whose life was and is focused on the inner. Their outer work is the teaching. Of course, that is a great blessing to be focused almost exclusively on the evident and clearly spiritual aspects of life, but do not think it makes it any easier. Because when your outer work is teaching, it does not mean that you are spending enough time in the inner. In addition, some of them had more visible outer work. Some were shopkeepers, or farmers; some were even, at times, in the court of the king, or the *emir* or the Sultan. These people, like Ibn Araby (*radiya-Llaahu 'anhu*), wrote a lot. They spoke a lot; they did a lot in the outer. Many of them were *qadis*/judges and advocates and teachers. That was their outer work and their inner practices were strong.

DEVELOPING THE INNER

We must work to develop our inner self and strive to be a person with an open door between the outer and inner, a person whose inner knowledge allows them to understand their outer circumstances. That person comes to a state of mind of believing that Allah is playing a major role in their life, and accepts what that role was without craving or yearning too many other things. One of

the ways, in the early days of Sufism, that people would accomplish awareness of the importance of such an attitude was through *sawm*/fasting.

Shaykh Abdu Madyan (*radiya-Llaahu 'anhu*) would have his students fast for forty days, only on water, leaving their *kbiha* only to answer the call of nature, to pray and to attend the *dhikr*. They would, of course, fast at *Rajab*. They would fast at *Shaaban*. They would do the fast three days a month, every month. It was done at a person's own discretion. Like the Prophet (*salla-Llaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) in the cave in Hira, the person who performed that *salm al wasl*, would repent, bathe and do two *rak'a*, and then they would do their forty days of seclusion. What they would do during that time is repeat, "*laa ilaaha illa-Llaah, laa ilaaha illa-Llaah*" until they developed a strong *tawakkul*, a strong reliance and trust in Allah.

Understand that the foundational principle of this type of practices is to develop awareness of the inner. For the outer to be in consonance with the inner, one must develop *tawakkul*/trust, and *khumul*/quiescence, and *suqun*/acquiescence. What did that mean? Complete quiescence meant the cessation of the ego-motivated thoughts and desires. This doesn't mean we shouldn't have thoughts or desires. It means ego-motivated thoughts or desires. Rumi said,

External enemies are nothing. What could they be? Don't you see how many thousands of unbelievers are prisoners of an unbeliever? Who is their leader? That one unbeliever is a prisoner of thought. We realize this, and the thoughts are to be reckoned with since by means of one feeble mean thought, so many thousands of people are held captive.

When I see distinctively that a hundred thousand forms without bound and hosts without end, multitude upon multitude are held captive by a person, who is held captive in turn by a miserable thought, then all these are prisoners of one thought. How would it be if the thoughts were great, endless, holy, sublime? We realize then, therefore, that thoughts matter. Forms are secondary, mere instruments.

How many of us are prisoners of our thoughts? Isn't that what has happened to us? The pain and the misery, the outward forms of inward anger and arrogance, misery and selfish ambition and cruelty to others—the way to overcome them is on the level of the inner, the way to overcome them is in where we direct our heart.

Abu Madyan (*radiya-Llaahu 'anhu*) said,

The heart has no more than one aspect at a time such that when it is occupied by a certain thing, it is veiled from another. Take care that you are not attracted to anything but Allah, lest He deprive you of the delights of intimate converse with Him.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I will return to the concept of unity. As I quoted earlier, Allah says in Qur'an:

Do not those who cover up the Truth see that the heavens and the earth were of one piece, and We parted them? (21:30)

We were one piece before we were born and were split into two: the physical and spiritual, the *dbaahir* and the *baatin*. The key to returning to 'whole-ness' lies in the heart; the only organ that exists both in the *dbaahir* (through the physical organ) and the *baatin* (*lateefah qalb*).

The expressions of Allah are reflected, like in a mirror, in the heart of a human. The secret hidden power of the heart is called *al-himma* (yearning). It is a secret power or energy, *quwwata kafeeya*, a force of the *baatin* (the hidden). *Himma* is a quality of the heart and an intention of the soul, so strong and powerful that it can, in and of itself, bring into existence that which is only a possibility among the possibilities of the un-manifest Divine.

If you analyze the concept of *himma*, you see that it is a dynamic capability, a creativity of the heart that we all have to project onto an external plane (the *dbaahir*), what is conceived by the heart (the

baatin). Everything exists as potential, but infinitesimally small. The heart can project the potential of the *baatin* onto the outer. It is this ability of the heart that gives the seeker the capability to perceive the Divine Consciousness.

It is this perceptive capability of the heart that allowed for the Prophet Muhammad (*salla-Llaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) to experience the highest spiritual state, and say, **"I have seen my Lord in the most beautiful of forms."**

This vision of Allah, Yaa Rabb, through the power of *himma* is not just the power of yearning. Remember; it is this secret force, *quwwata kbafiyya*. That experience has a *dhawq*/taste. Just like a taste, it pervades the being. That *dhawq* takes you to a state so high where Allah's Divine Presence is the only thing in your consciousness. That is that union with the Divine Beloved, that state of All-pervasiveness.

The perception becomes such that it pierces the veils, and the incredible power to penetrate the *dhaahir*, to see behind it the secret; everything that lies past the grasp of logic, reason and physical perception. As Shaykh al-Akbar (*radiya-Llaahu 'anhu*) says in "The Wisdom of the Prophets,"

Who is here and what is there? Who is here is what is there. He who is universal is particular, and he who is particular is universal. There is but one essence, the light of the essence also being darkness. He who heeds these words will not fall into confusion. In truth, only he knows what we say who is possessed of al-himma.

Sufism is not just observing rules, nor does it just tell you the different stages and degrees of a person's growth, but it is living a life fulfilling the potential of the heart: personal integrity, generosity, compassion, patience. The person who follows the true path of Tasawwuf is not just an ascetic who focuses only on their development, ignoring the injustices that are plaguing the world, the poverty, the illness, the wars and the starvation. The Sufi is someone who has a full engaged life. The Sufi is the person who uses discipline and uses vigilance and uses one's own self in the best way

possible to serve one's brother and sister and one's neighbor. Abu Madyan (*radiya-Llaahu 'anhu*) said,

The true Sufi must not be jealous, egotistical or arrogant with his knowledge, nor miserly with his money. Rather, he must act as a guide, not confused, but merciful of heart and compassionate with all of creation. To him every person is as useful as one of his hands. He is an ascetic, everything equal to him, whether it be praise or blame, receiving or giving, acceptance or rejection, wealth or poverty. He is neither joyful about what comes to him or sad about what has been lost.

That is the Sufi.

Let us remember, the life of the Sufi is one of *meezgaan*/balance between life, inner and outer, constant vigilance, and detachment from the world while at the same time fully participating in it. There is a time for inward practices, and a time for out activities. The Sufi seeks to see beyond the outer and inner into the whole, to see the integrated system, and to integrate the outer and inner in his/her life.